

PRESIDENTIAL POLLS

DRAWER 26

COMPARISON

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Abraham Lincoln Comparisons

Presidential Polls

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
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'Greatest Presidents' Poll in State Puts Lincoln First

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, whose 150th birthday anniversary the nation observes today, is considered by more than two-thirds of Minnesota adults to be one of the three greatest presidents the United States has had.



The other two, in the judgment of state residents, are Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Mr. Eisenhower narrowly out-polls George Washington in a "greatest presidents" survey conducted by the Minneapolis Tribune's Minnesota Poll.

MANY MEN and women named Theodore Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman and Woodrow Wilson in their lists.

A national commission this year is arranging a year-long program to mark the Lincoln sesquicentennial anniversary. Several new Lincoln postage stamps are being issued, and a newly-designed Lincoln penny is being produced.

President Eisenhower, in a proclamation, urged Americans "to do honor to Lincoln's memory . . . by a restudy of his life and his spoken and written words, and by personal rededication to the principle of citizenship and the philosophy of government for which he gave 'the last full measure of devotion'."

In Minnesota Poll interviews, made in homes and on farms in all parts of the state, voting-age men and women were asked:

"Of all the presidents the United States has had, starting with 1789, which three do you regard as the greatest?"

Lincoln is named by 69 per cent of the people interviewed, Franklin D. Roosevelt by 65 per cent, and Mr. Eisenhower by 36 per cent.

Does political partisanship influence the survey rankings? Persons who identify themselves as Democratic-Farmer-Laborites list the chief executives in this order: (1) Franklin D. Roosevelt, (2) Lincoln, (3) Truman, (4) Washington, (5) Eisenhower, (6) Theodore Roosevelt.

THIS IS the way Minnesota Republicans list their choices: (1) Lincoln, (2) Eisenhower, (3) Washington, (4) Franklin D. Roosevelt, (5) Theodore Roosevelt, (6) Hoover.

And independent voters' preferences follow this order: (1) Lincoln, (2) Franklin D. Roosevelt, (3) Washington, (4) Eisenhower, (5) Theodore Roosevelt, (6) Jefferson.

Also mentioned in the survey were Calvin Coolidge, William McKinley, Grover Cleveland, Andrew Jackson, James Monroe, William H. Taft, John Adams, John Quincy Adams, U. S. Grant and James Madison.

The Evaluation of Presidents: An Extension of the Schlesinger Polls

GARY M. MARANELL

IN 1948 and again in 1962, Arthur M. Schlesinger asked panels of historians and political scientists to rate the Presidents of the United States in categories ranging from "great" to "failure." Although these polls have been subjected to criticism, they have proved useful.¹ But there are serious problems inherent in this type of research.

This essay enlarges upon the Schlesinger polls, as well as updates them. It also introduces crucial methodological changes such as the use of social-psychological scaling methods instead of a simple ranking, the inclusion of additional dimensions of evaluation, the use of a much larger and less biased sample, and the use of a single professional society as a sampling frame. The two Schlesinger studies, which created the interest in this line of inquiry, found the following ordering of Presidents (see Table 1).

A question that might well have concerned many readers of the earlier presidential polls involves the possible alternative meanings and dimensions that may have been employed in the ratings of prestige. It is easy to see that an active President may be seen as prestigious, regardless of the significance of his accomplishments, or that an idealistic President may be more highly regarded than a practical one. To take into account questions like these, it was necessary to include ratings of other dimensions in addition to that of prestige. A total of seven dimensions were used in this study. The use of these additional dimensions allows for an examination of the relationships among them, which, in turn, permits increased understanding of what is involved in (or related to) the rating of presidential prestige.

The present survey employed a standard social-psychological scaling

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¹ The first poll served as background for Morton Borden, ed., *America's Ten Greatest Presidents* (Chicago, 1961), 2. Thomas A. Bailey, *Presidential Greatness: The Image and the Man from George Washington to the Present* (New York, 1966), used both polls and other materials. Bailey discusses the polls and the dilemmas involved in such assessments.

TABLE 1
SCHLESINGER POLLS OF PRESIDENTIAL GREATNESS

1948 poll (Responses from 55 experts) ²		1962 poll (Responses from 75 experts) ³
	Great	
1. Abraham Lincoln		1. Abraham Lincoln
2. George Washington		2. George Washington
3. Franklin D. Roosevelt		3. Franklin D. Roosevelt
4. Woodrow Wilson		4. Woodrow Wilson
5. Thomas Jefferson		5. Thomas Jefferson
6. Andrew Jackson		
	Near Great	
7. Theodore Roosevelt		6. Andrew Jackson
8. Grover Cleveland		7. Theodore Roosevelt
		8. James K. Polk } tie
9. John Adams		9. Harry S. Truman }
10. James K. Polk		10. John Adams
	Average	11. Grover Cleveland
11. John Quincy Adams		12. James Madison
12. James Monroe		13. John Quincy Adams
13. Rutherford B. Hayes		14. Rutherford B. Hayes
14. James Madison		15. William McKinley
15. Martin Van Buren		16. William Howard Taft
16. William Howard Taft		17. Martin Van Buren
17. Chester A. Arthur		18. James Monroe
18. William McKinley		19. Herbert Hoover
19. Andrew Johnson		20. Benjamin Harrison
20. Herbert Hoover		21. Chester A. Arthur } tie
21. Benjamin Harrison		22. Dwight D. Eisenhower }
	Below Average	23. Andrew Johnson
22. John Tyler		24. Zachary Taylor
23. Calvin Coolidge		25. John Tyler
24. Millard Fillmore		26. Millard Fillmore
25. Zachary Taylor		27. Calvin Coolidge
26. James Buchanan		28. Franklin Pierce
27. Franklin Pierce		29. James Buchanan
	Failure	
28. Ulysses S. Grant		30. Ulysses S. Grant
29. Warren G. Harding		31. Warren G. Harding

procedure to secure scores for the Presidents on each dimension. The process employed is the method of successive intervals⁴—a procedure developed by L. L. Thurstone which takes into account possible inequalities in the intervals of the latent continuum being employed. The latent continuum

² *Life*, 25 (Nov. 1, 1948), 65.

³ *New York Times*, July 29, 1962.

⁴ Bert F. Green, "Attitude Measurement," Gardner Lindzey, ed., *Handbook of Social Psychology* (2 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1954), I, 335-469.

in each case is the dimension identified. The procedure demands only a single judgment of each President by each respondent and is, therefore, a relatively undemanding method when the number of objects and/or dimensions is large. The procedure in this study was simply to ask each respondent to indicate the position of each President on an eleven interval scale. The ends of the scale are identified with descriptive labels of the dimension employed. The resulting scale contains meaningful intervals between scaled objects. Therefore, the scores can be graphed on a physical continuum, and the relative distances between Presidents can be observed.

The participants in the present study were asked to rate the Presidents⁵ on seven separate scales or dimensions:

1. The general prestige assigned to the President at the present time. The ends of the continuum were identified as high and low.
2. The strength of the role the President played in directing the government and shaping the events of his day. The ends of the continuum were identified as strong and weak.
3. The approach taken by each President toward his administration, an active approach or a passive approach.
4. An evaluation of the idealistic or practical nature of the official actions of each President.
5. An evaluation of the flexibility or inflexibility of the approach each President took in implementing his programs or policies.
6. An evaluation of the significance attached by each respondent to the accomplishments of each President. The ends of the continuum were identified as great and little.
7. An indication of the amount of information each respondent possessed about each President. The ends of the continuum were identified as a great deal and very little.

The sample of informants was randomly drawn from the membership of the Organization of American Historians. This group clearly includes historians who are most interested in American history. The total sample selected was 1,095, and the questionnaire designed to secure the ratings was sent to the respondents in March 1968. A single follow-up questionnaire was employed. The questionnaire was returned by nearly 600 historians, and it was discovered that 571 were sufficiently complete to be included in the analysis. The scores obtained and presented here are the standardized responses of these 571 historians. This sample is more than seven and one-

⁵ The respondents were asked to evaluate thirty-two Presidents. Two Presidents, William Henry Harrison and James A. Garfield, were excluded because both served in the presidency less than a year.

half times larger than Schlesinger's larger panel, and it contains no clearly identifiable regional or institutional bias.

The orderings of the Presidents in Tables 2 through 8 include a standard score for each on the dimensions involved. This value indicates the number of standard deviation units each President is above or below the mean, or average, for all Presidents on each of the seven dimensions employed.⁶ Thus, the point where the values shift from positive to negative numbers divides those above the mean from those below. A President scoring exactly on the mean would have a score of zero. With the scaling procedures employed and the use of standard scores, the distances between values are meaningful. If the identified points are located on a scale, the relative separations and clusterings can be used to reveal the relative similarity in the perceptions of Presidents.

TABLE 2
GENERAL PRESTIGE
(Dimension 1)

Abraham Lincoln	+2.10*	Herbert Hoover	— .09
George Washington	+1.78	Dwight D. Eisenhower	— .29
Franklin Roosevelt	+1.57	Andrew Johnson	— .30
Thomas Jefferson	+1.47	Martin Van Buren	— .37
Theodore Roosevelt	+1.18	William McKinley	— .39
Woodrow Wilson	+1.01	Chester A. Arthur	— .52
Harry Truman	+ .94	Rutherford B. Hayes	— .59
Andrew Jackson	+ .87	John Tyler	— .78
John Kennedy	+ .63	Benjamin Harrison	— .89
John Adams	+ .61	Zachary Taylor	— .96
James K. Polk	+ .30	Calvin Coolidge	— .99
Grover Cleveland	+ .25	Millard Fillmore	—1.19
James Madison	+ .23	James Buchanan	—1.28
James Monroe	+ .17	Franklin Pierce	—1.29
John Quincy Adams	+ .16	Ulysses S. Grant	—1.50
Lyndon Johnson	+ .06	Warren G. Harding	—1.84
William Howard Taft	— .05		

* A high positive score is high in prestige.

A comparison between Schlesinger's 1962 poll (see Table 1) and the present poll (see Table 2) reveals some interesting changes in the ordering of the Presidents. This is especially evident in the rank order of the Presi-

⁶ Standard deviation is a measure of the absolute dispersion of scores around a central mean or average. The more closely the scores cluster to the mean the smaller the standard deviation will be. If we wish to compare scores on different measurements we must employ standard deviation units through standard scores for they provide comparability across variables with highly different sizes of scores or cluster patterns.

dents appraised by both studies (excluding John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson). For example, Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt have moved ahead of Woodrow Wilson and Harry S. Truman has moved ahead of Andrew Jackson and James Polk. Numerous other changes have also occurred. Herbert Hoover, Dwight Eisenhower, James Monroe, and Andrew Johnson have moved up; and William McKinley, among others, has moved down. The rank order also indicates that at this point in time Kennedy is listed among the top ten Presidents.

An examination of the arrangement and scores of the Presidents on the second dimension demonstrates that general prestige and strength of role played by the President, although similar, are not the same thing (see Table 3). Therefore, general prestige is not simply a reflection of strength of role played. Some interesting observations include the fact that Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jackson, and Lyndon Johnson secure much higher scores on strength than prestige, and that Washington has a much higher prestige score than strength score. Franklin D. Roosevelt is also seen to be the most

TABLE 3
STRENGTH OF ACTION
(Dimension 2)

Franklin D. Roosevelt	+1.98*	Herbert Hoover	— .23
Abraham Lincoln	+1.74	William McKinley	— .30
Andrew Jackson	+1.37	Martin Van Buren	— .34
Theodore Roosevelt	+1.36	Andrew Johnson	— .40
Woodrow Wilson	+1.35	Dwight Eisenhower	— .43
Thomas Jefferson	+1.18	Chester A. Arthur	— .68
Harry Truman	+1.06	Rutherford B. Hayes	— .69
Lyndon Johnson	+1.00	John Tyler	— .716
George Washington	+ .89	Zachary Taylor	— .72
John F. Kennedy	+ .68	Benjamin Harrison	— .97
James K. Polk	+ .55	Calvin Coolidge	—1.17
John Adams	+ .41	James Buchanan	—1.19
Grover Cleveland	+ .18	Millard Fillmore	—1.22
James Madison	+ .05	Franklin Pierce	—1.33
James Monroe	— .02	Ulysses S. Grant	—1.36
William Howard Taft	— .17	Warren G. Harding	—1.66
John Quincy Adams	— .22		

* A high positive score is strength; a high negative score is weakness.

active as well as the strongest President (see Table 4). Lyndon Johnson is also found to score high on this dimension—much higher, in fact, than he scored on general prestige.

Idealism is not highly related to general presidential prestige (see Table 5). The idealists include Kennedy and Wilson who were high on prestige,

TABLE 4
PRESIDENTIAL ACTIVENESS
(Dimension 3)

Franklin D. Roosevelt	+2.06*	Herbert Hoover	— .14
Theodore Roosevelt	+1.61	William Howard Taft	— .16
Andrew Jackson	+1.51	Martin Van Buren	— .24
Lyndon Johnson	+1.39	William McKinley	— .34
Harry Truman	+1.25	John Tyler	— .56
John F. Kennedy	+1.06	Dwight D. Eisenhower	— .59
Woodrow Wilson	+1.05	Chester A. Arthur	— .69
Abraham Lincoln	+ .93	Rutherford B. Hayes	— .74
Thomas Jefferson	+ .91	Zachary Taylor	— .86
James K. Polk	+ .59	Benjamin Harrison	— .95
George Washington	+ .44	Millard Fillmore	—1.22
John Adams	+ .34	James Buchanan	—1.26
Grover Cleveland	+ .20	Franklin Pierce	—1.29
Andrew Johnson	+ .12	Ulysses S. Grant	—1.37
James Madison	+ .03	Calvin Coolidge	—1.37
John Quincy Adams	+ .01	Warren G. Harding	—1.66
James Monroe	— .06		

* A high positive score is active; a high negative score is passive.

but also seen as idealistic were Hoover, Andrew Johnson, and Millard Fillmore who were substantially less prestigious. Similarly, the practical Presidents include Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt who have high

TABLE 5
PRESIDENTS ON IDEALISM OR PRACTICALITY
(Dimension 4)

Woodrow Wilson	+4.23*	William McKinley	— .25
John Quincy Adams	+1.18	Rutherford B. Hayes	— .29
John F. Kennedy	+1.14	Benjamin Harrison	— .33
Herbert Hoover	+1.00	George Washington	— .41
Thomas Jefferson	+ .81	Harry Truman	— .44
Andrew Johnson	+ .66	Chester A. Arthur	— .45
James Madison	+ .55	Martin Van Buren	— .47
James Monroe	+ .40	Ulysses S. Grant	— .55
Millard Fillmore	+ .36	Theodore Roosevelt	— .57
Dwight D. Eisenhower	+ .13	Abraham Lincoln	— .61
John Tyler	+ .09	Franklin D. Roosevelt	— .62
Grover Cleveland	+ .08	Andrew Jackson	— .74
Zachary Taylor	+ .01	Warren G. Harding	— .81
James Buchanan	— .017	Lyndon Johnson	—1.01
John Adams	— .02	Calvin Coolidge	—1.41
William Howard Taft	— .04	James K. Polk	—1.44
Franklin Pierce	— .17		

* A high positive score is idealistic; a high negative score is practical.

prestige, but also Warren G. Harding who is lowest in general prestige. The flexibility dimension is also strikingly different than both general prestige and idealism (see Table 6). Wilson, who was seen to be the most idealistic President is seen to be the most inflexible; and Kennedy, who ranked third in idealism, is seen to be the most flexible. Lincoln, the second ranking President in flexibility, is seen to be more practical than idealistic. The simultaneous examination of flexibility and idealism reveals an interesting pattern of presidential similarity. There are four clear patterns of these two dimensions: flexibility coupled with idealism, flexibility coupled with practicality, inflexibility coupled with idealism, and inflexibility coupled with practicality. Each of these patterns is associated with a set of Presidents. This mode of analysis reveals similarities that are often, but not always, anticipated. For example, the findings reveal Wilson to be idealistic and inflexible, Jackson to be practical and inflexible, Lincoln to be practical and flexible, and Kennedy to be idealistic and flexible. It is not always immediately apparent, even to well-informed historians, which other Presidents share these combinations of characteristics. It is easy to see and suggest correctly that Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt share similar positions as practical and flexible. The similarity of Kennedy and Jefferson on these dimensions, as well as that of Jackson and Lyndon Johnson, is also not too surprising. However, the combination of Wilson and Hoover as in-

TABLE 6
Flexibility
(Dimension 5)

John F. Kennedy	+1.61*	Franklin Pierce	+ .16
Abraham Lincoln	+1.50	Rutherford B. Hayes	+ .14
Thomas Jefferson	+1.35	James Buchanan	+ .01
Franklin D. Roosevelt	+1.31	William Howard Taft	+ .01
Dwight D. Eisenhower	+1.21	James K. Polk	- .19
Warren G. Harding	+1.17	Lyndon Johnson	- .47
James Monroe	+1.03	Zachary Taylor	- .76
Ulysses S. Grant	+ .59	Calvin Coolidge	- .83
James Madison	+ .576	John Adams	- .85
George Washington	+ .57	Grover Cleveland	- .88
William McKinley	+ .49	Herbert Hoover	-1.01
Harry Truman	+ .31	John Tyler	-1.09
Millard Fillmore	+ .27	John Quincy Adams	-1.15
Martin Van Buren	+ .19	Andrew Jackson	-1.40
Theodore Roosevelt	+ .186	Andrew Johnson	-2.18
Benjamin Harrison	+ .186	Woodrow Wilson	-2.23
Chester A. Arthur	+ .18		

* A high positive score is flexible; a high negative score is inflexible.

TABLE 7
ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THEIR ADMINISTRATIONS
(Dimension 6)

Abraham Lincoln	+2.07*	John Quincy Adams	— .24
Franklin D. Roosevelt	+1.91	Herbert Hoover	— .29
George Washington	+1.72	Dwight D. Eisenhower	— .32
Thomas Jefferson	+1.31	Andrew Johnson	— .40
Theodore Roosevelt	+1.26	Martin Van Buren	— .46
Harry Truman	+1.12	Chester A. Arthur	— .52
Woodrow Wilson	+1.11	Rutherford B. Hayes	— .64
Andrew Jackson	+ .83	John Tyler	— .80
Lyndon Johnson	+ .53	Benjamin Harrison	— .86
James K. Polk	+ .50	Zachary Taylor	— .99
John Adams	+ .37	James Buchanan	—1.136
John F. Kennedy	+ .36	Millard Fillmore	—1.14
James Monroe	+ .13	Calvin Coolidge	—1.20
Grover Cleveland	+ .11	Franklin Pierce	—1.25
James Madison	+ .10	Ulysses S. Grant	—1.38
William Howard Taft	— .01	Warren G. Harding	—1.61
William McKinley	— .21		

* A high positive score is great accomplishment; a high negative score is little accomplishment.

flexible idealists is usually unanticipated; and it is only after some consideration that historians can recognize Hoover-Wilson similarities and appreciate that their major differences are on other, unrelated dimensions, such as their political ideologies.

The similarity of the ordering and scores of the Presidents on the dimension of accomplishments (see Table 7) and the general prestige dimension (see Table 2) suggests that this is a major area in the evaluation of general prestige. The fact that presidential accomplishment is of major importance in (or highly related to) presidential prestige should add confidence to an assessment of the meaningfulness of the initial evaluations. An examination of the correlations between dimensions reinforces this evaluation (see Table 9).

The Presidents best known to the panel of American historians appear to combine the recent Presidents whose administrations have been in their personal experiences and the Presidents who have the greatest continuing historical interest (see Table 8). This is obviously not a surprise to anyone.

Finally in order to compare the evaluations of the Presidents on the different dimensions the correlations between the seven sets of scores have been calculated (see Table 9). When two dimensions are highly correlated this means that the respondents evaluated the Presidents very similarly on

TABLE 8
RESPONDENTS' AMOUNT OF INFORMATION
(Dimension 7)

Franklin D. Roosevelt	+1.52*	John Quincy Adams	— .14
Woodrow Wilson	+1.421	Warren G. Harding	— .15
Abraham Lincoln	+1.417	James K. Polk	— .26
Theodore Roosevelt	+1.20	Grover Cleveland	— .29
John F. Kennedy	+1.18	James Monroe	— .31
Lyndon Johnson	+1.12	William McKinley	— .33
Thomas Jefferson	+1.11	Calvin Coolidge	— .37
Harry Truman	+1.08	Martin Van Buren	— .56
Andrew Jackson	+1.08	James Buchanan	— .98
George Washington	+ .86	Rutherford B. Hayes	—1.06
Dwight D. Eisenhower	+ .82	John Tyler	—1.29
John Adams	+ .26	Chester A. Arthur	—1.32
Herbert Hoover	+ .24	Zachary Taylor	—1.38
William Howard Taft	+ .09	Benjamin Harrison	—1.52
Andrew Johnson	+ .03	Millard Fillmore	—1.72
James Madison	+ .02	Franklin Pierce	—1.73
Ulysses S. Grant	— .05		

* A high positive score indicates possession of a great deal of information about the president; a high negative score is very little information.

these aspects. A low correlation indicates that the two sets of evaluations are different and that no systematic similarity of evaluation exists. An inverse or negative correlation indicates that persons systematically judge the same Presidents high on one dimension and low on others and vice versa. The correlation coefficients of .98 and .95 show that the most similar dimensions are general prestige and presidential accomplishment, and strength of the role played by each President. The activeness of presidential role was also highly related to these three dimensions.

TABLE 9
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE SEVEN EVALUATIONS
OF THE PRESIDENTS

Dimension	Prestige 1	Strength 2	Active- ness 3	Idealism 4	Flexi- bility 5	Accom- plishment 6	Infor- mation 7
1 Prestige	—						
2 Strength	.95	—					
3 Activeness	.89	.97	—				
4 Idealism	.17	.14	.13	—			
5 Flexibility	.13	.07	— .005	— .33	—		
6 Accomplishment	.98	.97	.91	.11	.16	—	
7 Information	.79	.84	.81	.17	.15	.81	—

Idealism and flexibility are very different from prestige, accomplishment, and strength of role and are in general inversely related to them. Knowledge of the Presidents is generally related to the presidential prestige, strength, activeness, and accomplishment.

How are our Presidents evaluated by American historians? Why are some Presidents highly regarded by historians and others not? This article attempts to answer these questions by discovering what is related to presidential prestige. It also ascertains how the Presidents are rated on general prestige and on other dimensions including: idealism, accomplishments, flexibility, activity, and strength of control and action of their administrations. The results indicate the existence of interesting shifts of opinion and provide some index of the contemporary evaluations of our most recent presidents.

Wartime leaders tops

Who were best presidents?

By FREDERICK M. WINSHIP

NEW YORK (UPI) — Jimmy Carter has expressed high hopes of joining the roster of great presidents — but just who makes up that roster?

The U.S. Historical Society, which is headquartered in Richmond, Va., posed that question. It asked the chairmen of history departments of 100 American colleges and universities to submit their selections of the 10 greatest presidents. The results of returns from 85 educators were released exclusively to UPI in New York Saturday.

Abraham Lincoln headed the list by unanimous vote, followed by George Washington, 84 votes, Franklin D. Roosevelt, 81, Theodore Roosevelt, 79, Thomas Jefferson, 78, Woodrow Wilson, 74, Andrew Jackson, 73, Harry Truman, 64, James Polk, 38, and John Adams, 35.

Carter has said that two of these — Roose-

velt and Truman — are among his own personal heroes and he intends to model his administration to some extent on theirs. But Virginius Dabney — president of the Society, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, and author — said he does not believe the Carter administration will be measured against any preceding administration.

"It will be measured by challenges unique to Carter's time and by attributes of character unique in himself, and finally by whether their interaction creates a living legacy rather than an historical one," Dabney said. He explained a living legacy as one lasting long after a president has left office — such as the Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

The man who came closest without making the list of 10 greats was Lyndon B. Johnson, who received 24 votes, the 11th largest number. Next in order were Grover Cleve-

land, 21, John F. Kennedy, 19, and Dwight D. Eisenhower, 14. Ten presidents received no votes at all — Gerald Ford, Warren Harding, Benjamin Harrison, James Garfield, Rutherford B. Hayes, Andrew Johnson, Franklin Pierce, Millard Fillmore, Zachary Taylor and William Henry Harrison.

Dabney noted that nine of the 10 presidents judged great either headed the nation during wars and military actions or had previously won fame as military heroes.

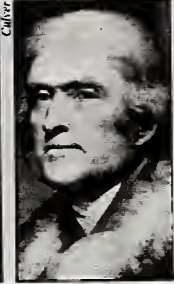
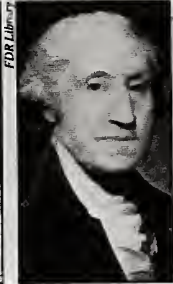
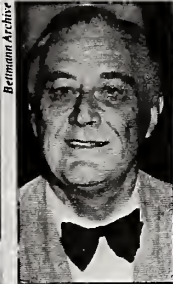
The wartime presidents were Jefferson (naval action against the Barbary Coast pirates), Lincoln (Civil War), Polk (Mexican War), Wilson (World War I), Franklin Roosevelt (World War II), and Truman (World War II and the Korean War). The military heroes were Washington (American Revolution), Jackson (War of 1812), and Theodore Roosevelt (Spanish-American War).

Intelligence Report

Because of volume of mail received, Parade regrets it cannot answer queries.

By Lloyd Shearer ©1982

U.S. Presidents—How They Rate



The best (l-r): Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Washington and Jefferson

In its relatively short history, say experts, the U.S. has produced only four truly great Presidents: Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, in that order. It has also produced four near-greats: Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Andrew Jackson and Harry Truman.

Nine are rated "above average," 14 are classified "average" (among them Ford and Carter), and five are categorized as "failing Presidents."

Among the failing Presidents, Richard Nixon, Ulysses S. Grant and Warren G. Harding occupy the three lowest rungs on the Presidential ladder. Andrew Johnson and James Buchanan are the other "failures."

These ratings are derived from a 1982 poll conducted by Dr. Robert K. Murray, professor of history at Pennsylvania State University. In his survey, Murray mailed a 17-page questionnaire containing 155 questions to 1997 American historians, each with a Ph.D. in U.S. history and each at least an assistant professor at a bona fide American university or college. Nearly half (953) responded in detail.

"I didn't include President Reagan, William Henry Harrison and James Garfield in the survey," Murray explains, "because none had—or, in Reagan's case, has—

been in office long enough for historians to pass judgment on their achievements or lack of them. My assistants and I are in the process of completing our computerization, and we intend to publish the full results in an academic journal in the spring of 1983."

Ever since 1941, American historians have been asked to evaluate U.S. Presidents. None of the previous surveys, however, equals Murray's in depth and number of participants.

We asked Dr. Murray, 60, how his colleagues ranked three consecutive Presidents of the 20th century: Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson.

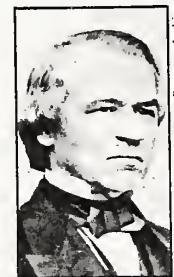
"In a field of 36," he replied, "Johnson is ranked 10th, Eisenhower 11th and Kennedy 13th. All are listed in the 'above average' category, but Kennedy of late has been slipping in the ratings. A few years following his

assassination, the historians voted Kennedy higher in the 'above average' category, but in subsequent years his ranking has gone down. Many historians feel that he never fulfilled his great potential. He was in office only 1000 days. Had he survived and accomplished more, no doubt he would be rated higher.

"Kennedy is an exception in that generally the rankings of recent Presidents improve with time. When Harry Truman left office, his contemporaries did not hold him in a particularly high light. Few historians considered him in the same league with Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Andrew Jackson. Now they do. Distance lends enhancement. It takes time for historians to reach a consensus on a Presidential performance."

Would history treat Richard Nixon kindly?

"Probably more kindly than do his contemporaries," Murray says. "But not much more. You ought to see the scandalous adjectives historians use to describe him and his administration. He was the only U.S. President who resigned in the face of impeachment. But he did revise the U.S.-China relationship. Only Grant and Harding rank lower than he does. Nixon ranks 34th. Perhaps by the end of the century, he may move up slightly. I can't see him improving much beyond that."



And the worst (l-r): Andrew Johnson, Nixon, Grant and—last—Harding

Soldiers' Jewelry

Dutch soldiers, who pioneered the on-duty use of hairnets in the 1960s, are now permitted to wear earrings. In a formal letter issued to the service chiefs, Deputy Minister of Defense Jan van Houwelingen



Al Haig discusses coiffures with Dutch soldier in 1976: What would general say now that Dutch can wear earrings?

recently declared that earrings may be worn by soldiers of both sexes. To date, neither mascara nor rouge has been OK'd for males.

The Dutch army brass are not only irritated by the new ruling on military jewelry but also are outraged by the publication of their names and home addresses in a magazine published by Onkrut, a group of radical anti-militarists.

Dutch soldiers—hairnets tucked inside their helmets, earrings in full display—surely will be one of Holland's top tourist attractions, perhaps rivaling London's changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace.

Sex Selection

Even if they could, most American women prefer not to choose the sex of their children. So, at least, they maintain in a Princeton University survey showing that 59% do not favor the option of sex selection. But 41% say they would prefer to have their first-born a boy, which seems to be the choice in most societies.

News Summary

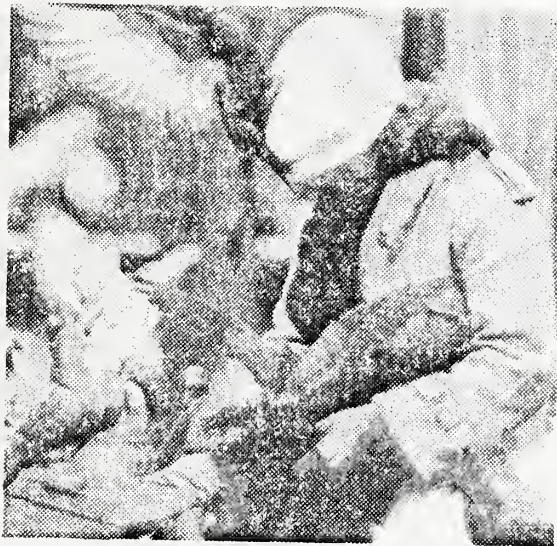


Photo: Associated Press

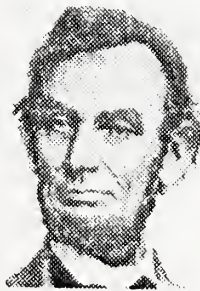
Cleared for landing

Carol Lee finds herself being used as a pigeon perch while feeding the birds in downtown Cincinnati Monday.

Lincoln rated No. 1

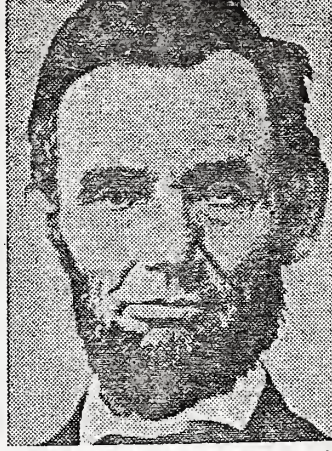
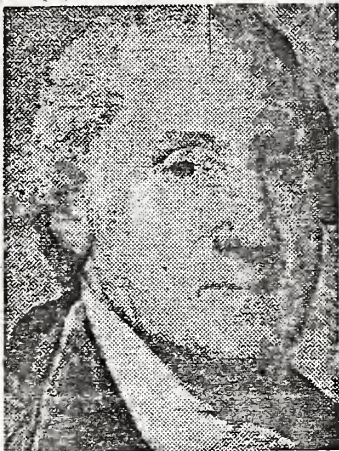
UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa.

— Historians rate Lyndon Johnson the best U.S. president since 1960, with John F. Kennedy, Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter listed as average and Richard Nixon relegated to the failure category. Abraham Lincoln ranks as the nation's No. 1 president, followed by Franklin D. Roosevelt, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, a Pennsylvania State University poll of 1,997 historians showed.



Lincoln

DAILY NEWS 2/21/83



Survey found that our country's greatest leaders were George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt.

Our Chief strength

We've been very lucky in Presidents: survey

State College, Pa. (AP)—Richard Nixon and four other Presidents were rated as failures, but America's strong leaders—including George Washington, whose birthday we celebrate today—far outnumbered the weak ones, said a historian who conducted a survey of the presidency.

"In general, we have been blessed with above-average leadership," said Robert K. Murray, who tabulated the responses of 970 historians questioned in the survey.

"We've been remarkably lucky, considering the relatively haphazard way we select a President. Historians have determined that almost one out of every four has been great or near great, and over half are above average," said the professor of history at Pennsylvania State University.

All respondents—a racial mix of men and women from all areas of the country—have doctorates in United States history and are no less than assistant professors at colleges or universities. Murray sent questionnaires to all 1,997 historians who fit the criteria; 970 responded in detail, he said.

THE GREATEST leaders were Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, in that order, according to the survey.

The country also has produced four "near greats": Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Andrew Jackson and Harry Truman.

At the bottom of the list was Warren Harding, with Ulysses Grant, Richard Nixon, Andrew Johnson and James Buchanan

just ahead of him.

"Nixon gives every evidence of climbing slowly, but it's hard to tell if he will ever climb out of the failure category. His status is still very much up for grabs," said Murray. Nixon, the only President to resign, was the country's most controversial leader, he said.

Among recent Presidents, Lyndon Johnson ranked 10th, Dwight Eisenhower 11th and John F. Kennedy 13th, all in the above-average category, according to the survey. Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter were rated as average.

Ronald Reagan was not included because he has not served long enough. Also omitted were William Henry Harrison and James Garfield, because their terms were too short to evaluate.



The near greats were (clockwise from top left) Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman.

gallup youth poll

Teens name Lincoln greatest president

By GEORGE GALLUP

PRINCETON, N.J. — Teen-agers responding in the latest Gallup Youth Survey named Abraham Lincoln as this nation's greatest president. Presidents George Washington and John Kennedy followed closely on the list.

These three presidents dominate the list, being named far more frequently than others who have held the nation's highest office.

Most of the remaining presidents named served during the 20th century. They include Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who finished fourth, Jimmy Carter (fifth), Gerald Ford (seventh) and Ronald Reagan (eighth). Rounding out the list are Theodore Roosevelt (ninth), and Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard Nixon (tied for 10th). The only other 19th-century president on the list is Thomas Jefferson, who placed sixth.

Of course, recent presidents are more familiar to young people, and can be expected to receive more attention. When asked, however, to name the worst president in our history, the Gallup sample of young Americans put Nixon at the top of the list. President Reagan was named second-worst, and third-worst was Carter. Very minor mention (3 percent or less) for this

dubious distinction was also given to Ford, Herbert Hoover and Lyndon Johnson.

Boys and girls gave very similar views, with differences occurring only in the case of Jefferson, who was favored more by males, and Carter, who found greater favor among young women.

According to age, respondents 13 through 15 were more likely to give favorable ratings to Washington and Ford, and unfavorable ratings to Carter.

Those who are 16 through 18 showed higher approval of Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, and greater disapproval of Nixon.

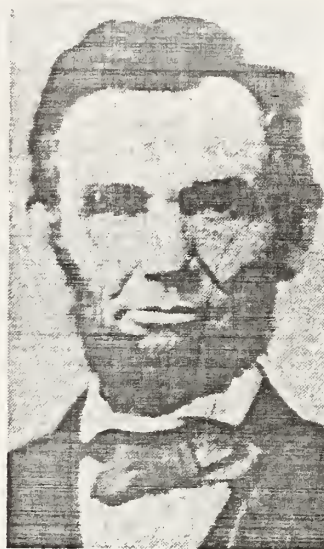
Results for the greatest president were obtained by combining responses to the question:

"What three U.S. presidents do you regard as the greatest?"

Answers for determining opinion of the worst president were gathered from responses to the question:

"What one U.S. president do you regard as the worst?"

The findings reported today are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 506 youths, 13 through 18, conducted in December 1982.



ABE LINCOLN

... voted the best.



JIMMY CARTER

... one of best and worst.

GREATEST PRESIDENT

Abraham Lincoln	70%
George Washington	56
John Kennedy	41
Franklin D. Roosevelt	18
Jimmy Carter	16
Thomas Jefferson	14
Gerald Ford	12
Ronald Reagan	9
Theodore Roosevelt	8
Dwight Eisenhower	7
Richard Nixon	7
Harry Truman	6
Don't know	4

NOTE: Nine other presidents were named by 2% or less of the respondents.

WORST PRESIDENT

Nixon	37
Reagan	23
Carter	16
Ford	3
Herbert Hoover	2
Lyndon Johnson	1
All others	7
Don't know	11
	100

Survey finds Mason and Dixon were right on target

Associated Press

MARYDEL, Md. — Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon did their job well.

A survey undertaken to check the work of the two 18th-century English astronomers who verified the border between Maryland and Delaware indicates that the town of Marydel may remain in Maryland.

"Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon were very excellent surveyors for their time," said Dr. Kenneth Weaver of the Maryland Geological Survey, which cooperated in the survey of the Mason-Dixon line. It was conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

But according to the new survey, the Maryland-Delaware border is not a straight line, but bows 17 feet from north to south.

The latest survey was undertaken because of confusion over where Delaware and Maryland actually meet. The new line coincides almost exactly with the line drawn by Mason and Dixon in 1765, and most of the boundary markers were found where they were supposed to be, Weaver said.

All of the markers have been replaced or moved back into position. In addition, surveyors have added markers at every mile.

"Considering it had been more than 200 years since the lines were surveyed, the original monuments were in remarkably good condition," Weaver said.

Mason and Dixon were hired to settle a dispute between the Calverts of Maryland and the Penns of Pennsylvania, which then encompassed

Delaware. The surveyors took two years to draw the line, and marked it, every five miles, with heavy sandstone markers.

The balance of the Mason-Dixon line runs east and west to form the Pennsylvania-Maryland border and is considered the border between the North and the South.

Delaware and Maryland officials became concerned about the fading boundary line in the early 1950s — leading to an act of Congress signed into law by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, to delineate the border. The survey was completed in 1962, but it wasn't until 1978 that the markers were replaced.

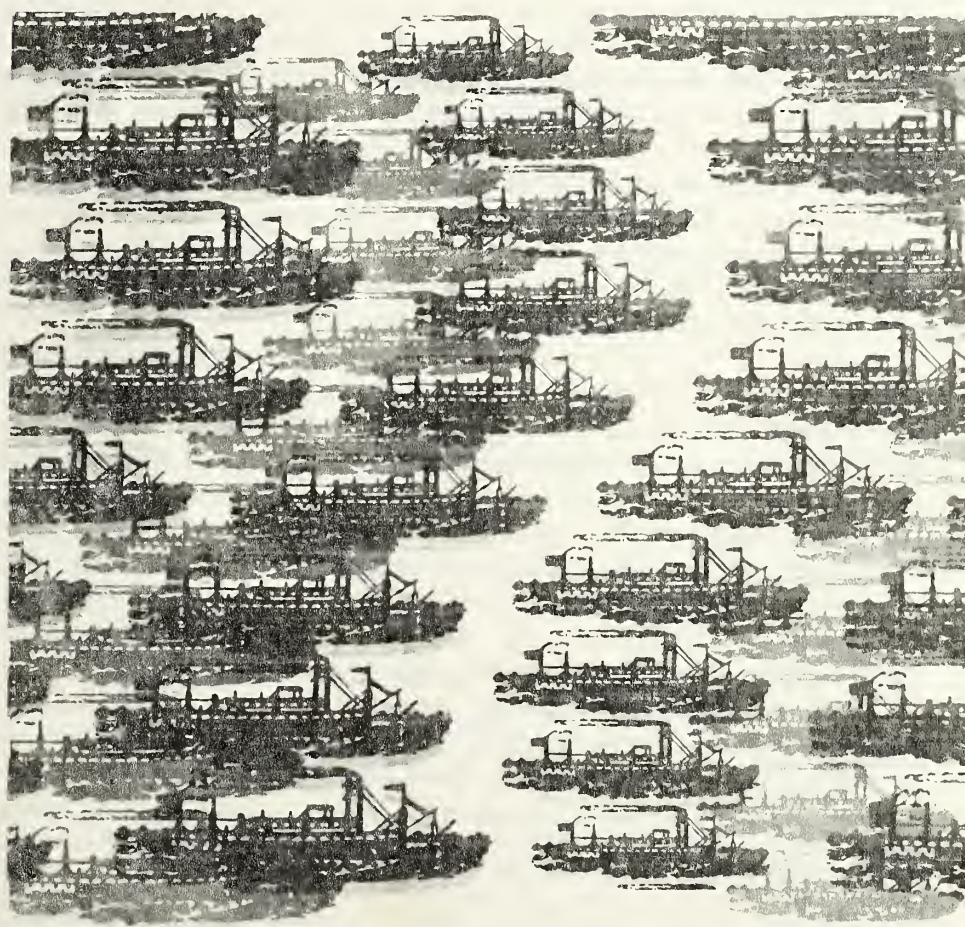
Last year, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued its report on the new survey, finally ending the 30-year project.

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The Presidential Performance Study: A Progress Report

Robert K. Murray and Tim H. Blessing

The rating of presidents is certainly not one of the more crucial problems confronting American historians. Yet in recent years it is a matter that has received considerable attention. Whatever the historical profession as a whole may think of the exercise, the lay public, particularly the press, is intrigued by how the "experts" view the presidents, and it broadcasts widely any new listing. Rating the holders of this uniquely American office apparently helps remind us of which human qualities we most admire, since we expect to find in presidents the best in our society. Perhaps, too, the American penchant for always wanting to know who is number one supports such interest. If number one can be determined in athletics, in rental car agencies, and in fast-food chains, why not in the presidency?

Recent professional interest in rating the presidents dates from the Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., poll of 1948.¹ Acting largely on a whim and allowing each respondent wide latitude to choose his own criteria for judging presidential greatness, Schlesinger solicited the opinions of fifty-five "experts," the majority of whom were professional historians. The findings were subsequently published in *Life* and were immediately embraced by the press as representing the collective judgment of historians everywhere.² Fourteen years later, Schlesinger repeated the exercise, this time surveying seventy-five experts. Fifty-eight were historians (including most of those polled in 1948), with the remainder mainly being journalists and political scientists. Published in the *New York Times Magazine*, the findings of this poll generally reinforced those of the earlier one and even more firmly established the Schlesinger

Robert K. Murray is professor of history and Humanities Institute Senior Research Fellow at Pennsylvania State University. Tim H. Blessing is a Ph.D. candidate in history at Pennsylvania State University. The Murray-Blessing poll was largely financed by the Institute for the Arts and Humanistic Studies at Pennsylvania State University.

¹ Only those polls involving the rating of presidents by professional historians concern us here. Several Gallup polls and surveys by a number of popular magazines have solicited opinions on such topics as "the greatest Americans" or "the three greatest presidents," but none of these surveys have involved professional historians or extended to rating all the presidents.

² *Life*, Nov. 1, 1948, pp. 65-66, 68, 73-74.

results as the common verdict of the historical fraternity. In both polls the top five presidents, in descending order, were Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Thomas Jefferson. The bottom two were Ulysses S. Grant and Warren G. Harding.³

Although the Schlesinger polls were given wide credence, many historians remained dubious of the validity of the rankings. In a 1966 book, *Presidential Greatness*, Thomas A. Bailey condemned the looseness of Schlesinger's polling procedures and proffered some conclusions of his own. Analyzing in detail and with considerable perspicacity the many pitfalls encountered in rating presidents, Bailey decided on thirty-five major and eight minor tests that ought to be applied to each president. These ranged from assessing the kinds of enemies a president had made to evaluating the type of world leadership he had offered. In the end, however, Bailey's conclusions did not deviate substantially from the Schlesinger results, agreeing, for example, that the three foremost presidents were Lincoln, Washington, and Franklin D. Roosevelt.⁴

Other polls and attempts at rating presidents followed. In 1977 the United States Historical Society, headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, asked the heads of one hundred history departments to name the ten "greatest" presidents. When the responses of the eighty-five who replied were tabulated, Lincoln, Washington, and Franklin D. Roosevelt again headed the list. No attempt was made in this poll to determine the nation's "worst" chief executives.⁵ Four years later, in 1981, David L. Porter asked forty-one American historians to rate the presidents. Again, the top three were Lincoln, Washington, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. The presidents rated lowest on the Porter list were Richard M. Nixon, James Buchanan, and Harding.⁶ The next year, 1982, the *Chicago Tribune* queried forty-nine "leading historians and political scholars" (all of whom had published a biography or some seminal work on a president) for their views about presidential performances. In much the same order as before, the three "best" presidents were declared to be Lincoln, Washington, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, while Buchanan, Nixon, and Harding were labeled the "worst." Interestingly, four of the participants in the *Chicago Tribune* poll of 1982 had also taken part in the original Schlesinger poll of 1948.⁷

³ *New York Times Magazine*, July 29, 1962, pp. 12-13, 40-41, 43.

⁴ Thomas A. Bailey, *Presidential Greatness: The Image and the Man from George Washington to the Present* (New York, 1966), 23-34, 262-66. For an interesting statistical comparison of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr.'s two polls and Bailey's ratings, see Tom Kynard, "An Analysis of Presidential Greatness and 'Presidential Rating,'" *Southern Quarterly*, 9 (April 1971), 309-29.

⁵ The United States Historical Society poll of 1977 produced a unanimous vote (85) for Abraham Lincoln. Next in line came George Washington (84), Franklin D. Roosevelt (81), Theodore Roosevelt (79), Thomas Jefferson (78), Woodrow Wilson (74), Andrew Jackson (73), Harry S. Truman (64), James K. Polk (38), and John Adams (35). No other president received more than 25 votes. For a description of this poll and Henry Steele Commager's comments on it, see *Parade*, May 8, 1977, pp. 16, 19.

⁶ The David L. Porter poll has not appeared in print, but those who participated in it received from Porter a full report of the results. A copy of the report is in the possession of Robert K. Murray, who was a participant in the Porter poll.

⁷ Steve Neal, "Our Best and Worst Presidents," *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, Jan. 10, 1982, pp.

It should be clear by now that rating presidents is nothing new and that there has been a perennial interest in doing so even though the results have not been novel or surprising. The fact that contemporary presidents can always be added to the list undoubtedly stimulates a recurring desire to measure these newcomers against presidents of the past. Unfortunately, the original shortcomings of the Schlesinger polls remain with us. None of the polls since 1948 attempted either to define or to uncover any specific criteria for evaluating presidential performance. All the polls involved only a handful of historians, selected mainly from the "elite" of the profession by emphasizing publications and membership in the faculties of "top" institutions. The two Schlesinger polls, for example, included five past presidents of the American Historical Association and a dozen Pulitzer Prize winners.⁸ Moreover, none of the past polls tried to examine relationships between the respondents' answers and such variables as the sex and age (almost all the respondents were males between the ages of forty-five and sixty-five), personal bias, residence, place of birth, and source and type of education of the respondent.

In November 1981, 1,997 questionnaires initiating a new presidential survey were sent by Robert K. Murray and Tim H. Blessing to all Ph.D.-holding American historians with the rank of assistant professor or above listed in the American Historical Association's *Guide to Departments of History* for 1979-1980 and 1980-1981.⁹ The decision to use this particular group of historians was dictated by costs, by the high level of their training, and by the fact that they were all involved in full-time teaching (administrators and those with joint appointments in other departments were excluded). That this group was in daily contact with students and was influencing students' opinions was considered especially important.

Broader in scope than were previous polling efforts, the Murray-Blessing poll was undertaken in a desire to meet the criticisms leveled at the other polls. The poll also used modern opinion-research techniques and employed a computer in assessing the results. The ultimate goal was not only to determine once again the attitude of historians toward various presidential performances but also to discover some of the reasons why historians collectively consider some presidents clearly superior to others.

Section 1 of the nineteen-page questionnaire asked the respondent for certain personal information, such as date and state of birth, years and institutions attended, and so on. The text of this article must be read in addition to scanning its presidential rating list. Respondents were asked to rate the presidents on a scale of 0 to 5 in five categories (leadership, accomplishments, political skill, appointments, and character) and also, separately, to name the "best" ten and the "worst" ten presidents in our history. The results cause some confusion. For example, the point totals of the five categories make Franklin D. Roosevelt second only to Abraham Lincoln, but the ten "best" list ranks him as third. Richard M. Nixon, in turn, is fourth from the bottom in the five-category point totals but is ranked just above Warren G. Harding on the ten "worst" list. The four historians who also took part in the original Schlesinger survey were Marcus Cunliffe, David H. Donald, Dumas Malone, and Earl Pomeroi.

⁸ Bailey, *Presidential Greatness*, 32.

⁹ American Historical Association, *Guide to Departments of History*, 1979-80 (Washington, 1979); American Historical Association, *Guide to Departments of History*, 1980-81 (Washington, 1980).

tutions of advanced degrees, area of concentration (time period), subject specialty, number of students taught per year, and number and type of publications. Section 2, containing 67 questions, requested the respondent's views on the presidential office in general. Section 3, comprising 113 questions, asked for the respondent's reactions to certain specific presidential actions, covering almost equally the years 1789-1865, 1865-1945, and since 1945. Finally, section 4 requested that the respondent rate all presidents (except for William H. Harrison, James Garfield, and Ronald Reagan) within the general categories of great, near great, above average, average, below average, and failure.

The questionnaires were to be returned at the convenience of the recipients. By March 1982, 846 completed questionnaires were in hand and coding of the information for the computer was begun. While the coding was being undertaken, 107 additional completed questionnaires were received. Seventeen other questionnaires were returned but were missing a page or otherwise incomplete. The reply rate of 48.6 percent, representing almost one-half the total mailed, was a response beyond our rosiest expectations.

Reaction to the survey ranged from praise (favorable comments on 16 questionnaires) through passive-neutral response (no general comment on 928 questionnaires) to criticism (unfavorable comments on 26 questionnaires). At some place on 73 questionnaires a word or a short phrase appeared to indicate the respondent's displeasure with a particular question. Among the 17 questionnaires returned incomplete, 4 were left entirely blank, with appended notes stating that the respondent did not wish to engage in any historical study that was computer-connected or that attempted to rank the presidents. (Several experts whom Schlesinger approached in 1948 and 1962 also refused to participate in his polls for the latter reason.) In addition, letters were received (without questionnaires attached) from seven historians who vigorously attacked the entire procedure, explaining at length their reservations. The fact remains that the vast majority who returned the questionnaires evidently did so in good faith, and there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of their responses. Indeed, of all the questionnaires returned, only two seemed to be answered frivolously.

Because of the interest shown in the project by the large number of inquiries and phone calls received, and because of the time-consuming coding and analysis required for sections 2 and 3, we decided to gather the results already obtained from sections 1 and 4 into a "progress report" for immediate publication. A detailed evaluation of sections 2 and 3 demands a much more elaborate treatment than can be incorporated into any article, and a monograph is planned to consider the nature of historians' attitudes toward the presidency in general and their concepts of what is inherent in a superior presidential performance. The remainder of this article, therefore, deals only with how the 846 respondents who returned completed questionnaires by March 1982 rated the presidents (section 4), how these results compare with those of past presidential polls, and how much these results were influenced by demographic and personal factors (section 1).

Of the 846 respondents, 783 were male, 59 were female, and 4 did not indicate sex. Grouped by age, 23 respondents were 29-34 years of age, 302 were 35-44, 296 were 45-54, 173 were 55-64, and 49 were 65 or older; 3 did not report their ages. For place of birth the number of respondents ranged from a high of 108 for New York to 0 for Alaska, Hawaii, Nevada, New Hampshire, or Wyoming. The numbers of respondents born in Illinois (52) and Ohio (51) were next in line to the number born in the Empire State.¹⁰

For area of concentration 119 respondents listed colonial and revolutionary, 57 the national period, 110 the middle period, 78 Civil War and Reconstruction, 113 United States 1877-1900, 258 United States 1900-1945, and 93 United States since 1945; 18 did not specify a concentration. The subject specialties indicated by the largest number of respondents were political (175), cultural and social (133), diplomatic (95), and intellectual (61). The specialties listed by the fewest respondents were women's history (15), immigration and ethnic (11), and American Indian (11).¹¹

The total number of students taught by all respondents each year, according to their reports, was slightly over two hundred thousand. Eighteen of those surveyed stated that they taught more than one thousand students per year. Only 105 of the 846 respondents reported that they had published no articles or books during their careers. Among those who had published, the average number of articles produced was nine and the number of books authored, co-authored, or edited was three.

No fewer than 98 different institutions were listed as having granted a Ph.D. degree to a respondent. Of these, 26 were named by 10 or more respondents, accounting for 70 percent of the total number of respondents. The largest number received the Ph.D. degree from the University of Wisconsin (70). Besides the University of Wisconsin, the institutions that granted doctorates to 25 or more respondents are the University of Illinois (25), University of Chicago (27), University of Virginia (27), Yale University (27), University of California, Berkeley (41), and Harvard University (49).¹²

As determined from the evaluations supplied by all 846 respondents, four presidents are judged to be great—Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Washington, and Jefferson. Four others are considered to be near great—Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson, Andrew Jackson, and Harry S. Truman. Nine presidents are rated as above average—John Adams, Lyndon Johnson, Dwight D. Eisenhower, James K. Polk, John F. Kennedy, James Madison, James Monroe, John Quincy

¹⁰ Birth states having between 20 and 50 respondents are Wisconsin (20), Massachusetts (20), Minnesota (24), Indiana (27), Missouri (28), Iowa (35), New Jersey (38), California (41), Pennsylvania (44), and Texas (45).

¹¹ Other subject specialties are state and local (21), urban and quantitative (23), Afro-American (27), military (34), legal and constitutional (40), economic (46), western and frontier (48), and southern (55). Fifty-one respondents did not list a specialty.

¹² Those institutions contributing between 15 and 25 Ph.D.'s are Princeton University (15), University of Pennsylvania (15), Ohio State University (15), University of Minnesota (17), University of Missouri (18), University of Michigan (19), University of North Carolina (20), and University of Texas (22).

TABLE 1
A Comparison of Polls

Murray-Blessing 1982 (N = 846)			Chicago Tribune 1982 (N = 49)	
	Mode	Mean		
Lincoln	1	1.13	Lincoln	10 Best
F. Roosevelt	1	1.22	Washington	
Washington	1	1.27	F. Roosevelt	
Jefferson	1	1.70	T. Roosevelt	
T. Roosevelt	2	1.93	Jefferson	
Wilson	2	2.07	Wilson	
Jackson	2	2.32	Jackson	
Truman	2	2.45	Truman	
J. Adams	3	2.85	Eisenhower	
L. Johnson	3	2.87	Polk	
Eisenhower	3	2.99	McKinley	10 Worst
Polk	3	3.06	L. Johnson	
Kennedy	3	3.13	Cleveland	
Madison	3	3.30	Kennedy	
Monroe	3	3.35	J. Adams } tie	
J. Q. Adams	3	3.42	Monroe }	
Cleveland	3	3.43	Madison	
McKinley	4	3.78	Van Buren	
Taft	4	3.87	J. Q. Adams	
Van Buren	4	3.97	Taft	
Hoover	4	4.03	Hoover	
Hayes	4	4.05	Hayes	
Arthur	4	4.24	Ford	
Ford	4	4.32	Arthur	
Carter	4	4.36	B. Harrison	
B. Harrison	4	4.40	Taylor	
Taylor	5	4.45	Carter	10 Worst
Tyler	5	4.61	Tyler	
Fillmore	5	4.64	Coolidge	
Coolidge	5	4.65	A. Johnson	
Pierce	5	4.95	Fillmore	
A. Johnson	6	5.10	Grant	
Buchanan	6	5.15	Pierce	
Nixon	6	5.18	Buchanan	
Grant	6	5.25	Nixon	
Harding	6	5.56	Harding	

SOURCES: *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, Jan. 10, 1982, pp. 8-13, 15, 18; report on results of David L. Porter poll, 1981 (in Robert K. Murray's possession); *New York Times Magazine*, July 29, 1962, pp. 12-13, 40-41, 43; *Life*, Nov. 1, 1948, pp. 65-66, 68, 73-74.

TABLE 1
 A Comparison of Polls

Porter 1981 (N = 41)	Schlesinger 1962 (N = 75)	Schlesinger 1948 (N = 55)
Lincoln Washington F. Roosevelt Jefferson T. Roosevelt Great	Lincoln Washington F. Roosevelt Wilson Jefferson Great	Lincoln Washington F. Roosevelt Wilson Jefferson Great
Wilson Jackson Truman Polk J. Adams L. Johnson Near Great	Jackson T. Roosevelt Polk Truman J. Adams Cleveland Near Great	Jackson T. Roosevelt Cleveland J. Adams Polk Near Great
Eisenhower Madison Kennedy Cleveland McKinley Monroe J. Q. Adams Van Buren Hayes Taft Hoover Carter Arthur B. Harrison Ford Average	Madison J. Q. Adams Hayes McKinley Taft Van Buren Monroe Hoover B. Harrison Arthur Eisenhower A. Johnson Average	Monroe Hayes Madison Van Buren Taft Arthur McKinley A. Johnson Hoover B. Harrison Average
Taylor Tyler Fillmore Coolidge A. Johnson Grant Pierce Below Average	Taylor Tyler Fillmore Coolidge Pierce Buchanan Below Average	Tyler Coolidge Fillmore Taylor Buchanan Pierce Below Average
Nixon Buchanan Harding Failure	Grant Harding Failure	Grant Harding Failure

Adams, and Grover Cleveland. Five presidents are rated as failures—Andrew Johnson, Buchanan, Nixon, Grant, and Harding.¹³

These findings do not vary greatly from those of past polls, but there are some differences. (See table 1.) In all previous polls Washington ranks second only to Lincoln. In the Murray-Blessing poll Franklin D. Roosevelt occupies second place, dropping Washington to third.¹⁴ Although both Schlesinger polls have Wilson in the fourth slot and the *Chicago Tribune* poll places Theodore Roosevelt there, the Murray-Blessing poll shows Jefferson in fourth place. Truman ranks high on the list, either eighth or ninth, in all polls except the 1948 poll in which he was not rated. Jackson, too, ranks well up in the standings, either sixth or seventh. Theodore Roosevelt, Jefferson, and Wilson float between fourth and seventh place, depending on the poll. But whatever the slight variations among the polls, the three most recent agree that the eight top-rated presidents are Lincoln, Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson, Jackson, and Truman—with Lincoln, Washington, and Franklin D. Roosevelt the first three.

Among presidents in the middle group greater differences appear. Only the second of the two Schlesinger polls dealt with some of our more modern presidents, and in it Eisenhower ranks a lowly twenty-second. In the three most recent polls Eisenhower fares better, ranking twelfth in the Porter poll, ninth in the *Chicago Tribune* poll, and eleventh in the Murray-Blessing poll. The Porter and *Chicago Tribune* polls put Kennedy fourteenth; the Murray-Blessing poll ranks him thirteenth. Lyndon Johnson ranks eleventh in the Porter poll, twelfth in the *Chicago Tribune* poll, and tenth in the Murray-Blessing poll.

Also within the middle group of presidents, Polk ranks consistently high fluctuating between eighth and twelfth, depending on the survey. John Adams (either ninth or tenth) and Madison (between twelfth and fourteenth) remain relatively steady in all the polls except for the *Chicago Tribune* poll, where John Adams falls to fifteenth place and Madison to seventeenth. Although the first Schlesinger poll ranks Monroe twelfth, he appears in the subsequent four polls as eighteenth, seventeenth, sixteenth, and fifteenth. A similar pattern holds true for John Quincy Adams, who begins in the first Schlesinger poll as eleventh, falls in the second to thirteenth, and winds up in the last three surveys as eighteenth, nineteenth, and sixteenth.

¹³ These rankings are based on mean averages calculated by assigning a factor of 1 to the category of great, 2 to near great, 3 to above average, and so on to 6 for failure. This calculation resulted in means that ranged from 1.13 for Lincoln to 5.56 for Harding. The mode (the category designation of a president by the largest number of respondents) was used as the measure for a president's category standing.

¹⁴ Refer to note 7 for the anomaly concerning Franklin D. Roosevelt and the *Chicago Tribune* poll. The overall point totals in that poll presaged what the Murray-Blessing results now confirm concerning Franklin D. Roosevelt's second position. A 1977 survey ranking the presidents as moral leaders, given to American studies professors in both the United States and the United Kingdom, also resulted in Franklin D. Roosevelt coming in a strong second; see Ronald A. Wells, "American Presidents as Political and Moral Leaders: A Report on Four Surveys," *Fides et Historia*, 11 (Fall 1978), 39-53.

The most glaring differences in the rankings among presidents in the middle group occur with Cleveland and William McKinley. The first Schlesinger poll ranks Cleveland eighth—near great. The second Schlesinger poll drops him to eleventh. Then he falls to fifteenth in the Porter poll, rebounds to thirteenth in the *Chicago Tribune* poll, and plunges to seventeenth in the Murray-Blessing poll. A somewhat different fate befalls McKinley. He begins as eighteenth in the first Schlesinger poll, climbs in the second to fifteenth, falls one place in the Porter poll to sixteenth, rises to eleventh in the *Chicago Tribune* poll, and resumes the eighteenth position in the Murray-Blessing poll.

As with the top-rated presidents, a clearer consensus emerges regarding the lowest-rated presidents. In every poll Harding is firmly entrenched in last place. Either Grant or Buchanan appears rather consistently in the next-to-last slot. Nixon ranks either second or third from the bottom in the polls taken since his resignation. Franklin Pierce and Andrew Johnson are the two other presidents who repeatedly appear at the lowest levels. American historians may differ somewhat on the relative ranking of presidents in the middle categories, but they show little collective doubt about who have been the worst presidents in our history.

We will not presume in this article to evaluate the validity of the results of other polls or to analyze their polling procedures. Instead, we will describe our own evaluation process and point out the statistical significance of certain influences that created some interesting variations within the present survey.

We endeavored first to ascertain the relative "controversiality" of the presidents by plotting the deviation (or swing) in the respondents' rankings of each one. Expected and unexpected results appeared. The four most controversial presidents (that is, those receiving the widest distribution of ratings) are Nixon, Lyndon Johnson, Herbert Hoover, and Jackson. Of these four, Nixon is by far the most controversial. John Quincy Adams, Andrew Johnson, Truman, Wilson, Jimmy Carter, Polk, and Kennedy are next in line. Conversely, the three least controversial presidents are Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Lincoln, with Lincoln the least controversial. These findings would seem to indicate that in any future survey the positions of Nixon, Lyndon Johnson, Hoover, and Jackson are more likely to change than are those of other presidents. Besides Lyndon Johnson and Nixon, of our recent chief executives, Truman, Carter, and Kennedy apparently have a somewhat greater chance of experiencing a change in rating category than do Eisenhower and Gerald Ford. On the other hand, it seems very unlikely that any shift will occur for Franklin D. Roosevelt. (See table 2.)

We next compared the collective ratings of the presidents by all respondents with those by the various age groups within the survey sample to detect any significant variations. The general finding is not too surprising: the older the respondent, the more lenient in judging presidential performances. Other, more subtle differences also appear, some of which might be explained by the historical literature to which each age group was primarily exposed (revisionist biographies, for example).

TABLE 2
Presidents Ranked by Controversiality
(As Measured by Standard Deviation)

Rank	President	Standard Deviation of Ratings	Rank	President	Standard Deviation of Ratings
1	Nixon	1.128	19	Tyler	.783
2	L. Johnson	1.066	20	Fillmore	.778
3	Hoover	1.065	21	T. Roosevelt	.777
4	Jackson	1.027	22	Coolidge	.771
5	J. Q. Adams	1.011	23	Ford	.762
6	A. Johnson	1.004	24	McKinley	.761
7	Truman	.993	25	Taft	.758
8	Wilson	.983	26	Monroe	.752
9	Carter	.975	27	Arthur	.746
10	Polk	.975	28	Harding	.737
11	Kennedy	.920	29	Taylor	.732
12	Madison	.913	30	Pierce	.715
13	J. Adams	.880	31	Van Buren	.711
14	Eisenhower	.871	32	Hayes	.683
15	Cleveland	.856	33	B. Harrison	.678
16	Jefferson	.853	34	Washington	.629
17	Grant	.848	35	F. Roosevelt	.586
18	Buchanan	.805	36	Lincoln	.480

Note: One unit of measure is equal to one full category. Hence Richard M. Nixon, Lyndon Johnson, Herbert Hoover, Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and Andrew Johnson have standard deviations greater than a full category.

TABLE 3
Difference from Mean Rating by Age Groups of Historians for Presidents
Showing Significant Variations
($\alpha = .05$)

President	Age of Historian						
	65 and Over (N = 48)	60-64 (N = 70)	55-59 (N = 95)	50-54 (N = 119)	45-49 (N = 168)	40-44 (N = 181)	39 and Under (N = 130)
Buchanan	.25	.21	.03	.01	-.02	-.06	-.13
Cleveland	.53	.22	.15	.04	-.14	-.11	-.14
Hoover	.30	.08	.29	.02	-.14	-.03	-.17
A. Johnson	.55	.45	.20	.08	-.26	-.14	-.15
Truman	.21	.25	.21	.01	.08	-.10	-.34
Wilson	.22	.41	.10	-.05	.02	-.06	-.26

Note: This table reports the result of subtracting the mean rating given to a president by each particular age group from the mean rating given that president by all respondents. It indicates how much a particular age group varies from the average, and a comparison of the results indicates how much the various groups differ from each other. For instance, those historians of age 60 and over rate James Buchanan higher than those of age 50 to 59, and all of these rate him higher than historians below age 50.

Of presidents who received statistically different ratings from the various age groups, Cleveland is rated more harshly by the younger historians than by the older historians. The same is true for Buchanan and Andrew Johnson. Hoover receives his lowest ratings from the youngest group of historians (those under 40); he is rated highest by those over 65, who, ironically, are the children of the Great Depression. In light of this situation, Cleveland, Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, and Hoover will probably not rise above their current rankings as older historians die off. That historians 55 years of age and over also show Wilson much greater respect than do any of the younger groups indicates that Wilson, too, is probably not destined to climb higher in the rankings. Truman presents an intriguing case: the three older groups (ages 55 and older) rate him far more leniently than do the two middle groups (ages 45 through 54), and all of these are more sympathetic to him than are the two youngest age groups (ages 44 and younger). Does this mean that Truman has risen in the ratings as far as he will go and that he will drop, as Cleveland already has dropped, below the near great category? On the other hand, since no significant trends appear in the way different age groups rate Lincoln, Washington, or Franklin D. Roosevelt, no rating change can be predicted for them on the basis of the age factor.¹⁵ (See table 3.)

Comparing ratings by the sex of the respondent offered several additional insights. Admittedly small, the female sample of fifty-nine proved sufficient to establish a few verifiable differences. Women historians overall are harsher in their assessment of presidential performances than are men historians. Polk and Washington, in particular, receive severe treatment. Female ratings of these two presidents are almost a half-category lower than the ratings by males (defining great, near great, and each other descriptive rating as a full category). Four statistically significant exceptions to the tendency toward lower ratings by women are evident, however. Carter, Lyndon Johnson, Grant, and Kennedy are all rated higher by women than by men historians. We cannot pinpoint at this moment what particularly antagonized women historians about the first two presidents or so appealed to them about the last four, but we can surmise that if appreciably more women entered the historical profession, the collective ratings of the first two would suffer and those of the last four would benefit.¹⁶ (See table 4.)

We hypothesized at the outset of the study that regional differences might affect historians' attitudes toward particular presidents. However, the results obtained by comparing respondents' rankings by region of birth or by region of

¹⁵ For each of these six presidents an analysis of variance indicates that at least one age group differs significantly from at least one other age group in judging the president. Findings for each of the six presidents show clear and important trends; comparisons with the findings for other presidents reveal no similar trends for the others. In any case, there is a 95 percent certainty that significant differences exist among certain age groups in rating the presidents in table 3.

¹⁶ As determined by a comparison-of-means test. For those not familiar with the use of significance levels, the lower the level, the more likely some significant difference exists. Thus, a .05 level is traditionally considered to be the minimum needed for significance, while a .01 level is the minimum needed for something to be highly significant. For instance, in table 4 the difference between male and female views of Jimmy Carter is highly significant, whereas the difference between the evaluations of Ulysses S. Grant is only significant.

TABLE 4
Mean Rating by Sex of Historian for Presidents
Showing Significant Variations
($\alpha = .05$)

President	Male Rating (N = 787) ^a	Female Rating (N = 59)	Significance Level
Carter	4.39	4.09	.005
Grant	5.28	5.05	.041
L. Johnson	2.90	2.56	.020
Kennedy	3.16	2.85	.014
Polk	3.05	3.46	.002
Washington	1.25	1.59	.007

Note: The higher the score, the lower the evaluation by a specific group. For instance, the male rating of Jimmy Carter (4.39) is a lower score than the female rating of Carter (4.09).

^a Includes the four historians who did not indicate sex.

TABLE 5
Presidents with Significant Differences in Ratings by Historians'
Regions of Birth and Ph.D.-Granting Institutions
($\alpha = .05$)

	South (N = 97)	Midwest (N = 174)	West (N = 51)
North (N = 136)	Hayes* Fillmore Buchanan A. Johnson Polk* Grant*	Hayes* A. Johnson* Truman Polk*	
West (N = 174)	Buchanan Grant* A. Johnson	A. Johnson	
Midwest (N = 51)	Eisenhower* Buchanan Grant* Polk*		A. Johnson

Note: Where an analysis of variance indicated that historians of one area differed on a president from historians of at least one other area (at the .05 level of significance), the Duncan Range, Fisher, and Scheffe procedures were all used to locate which specific areas differed. If the Duncan Range and Fisher tests (both adjusted for differing sample sizes) show that two areas have significant differences ($\alpha = .05$), then the president's name is listed. To find the areas that disagree and which presidents they disagree on, choose a row or column and notice the presidents listed at the intersecting columns or rows. For instance, following the West row across indicates that the West disagrees significantly with the South on James Buchanan, Ulysses S. Grant, and Andrew Johnson, and that it disagrees with the Midwest on Andrew Johnson. Following the West column down shows that the North and the West do not disagree on any president.

* Results obtained from Duncan Range, Fisher, and Scheffe procedures all show significant differences.

the Ph.D.-granting institution are vague and inconclusive. Only when both the respondents' region of birth and the region of the Ph.D.-granting institution are the same do any significant variations occur. Even then, little difference appears in the rankings of most presidents. For example, no regional differences can be found in the rankings of Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Washington. Even the rankings of the modern presidents who are most controversial—Hoover, Nixon, and Lyndon Johnson—show only minor variations. But differences do appear in the cases of a few presidents. The North (meaning those historians born in and receiving the Ph.D. in a northern state) is significantly easier in rating Rutherford B. Hayes than either the South or the Midwest. The South, in turn, rates Millard Fillmore higher by as much as two thirds of a category than does any other regional group. The same occurs in the case of Buchanan, the difference being more than one third of a category. On the other hand, the South is far harsher on Grant than is any other regional group.

A significant difference between the North and West and the South and Midwest also appears in the ratings of Andrew Johnson, with the latter two areas being much more tolerant in their assessments. The North is much harder on Polk than is the South. The Midwest rates Truman higher than other regional groups, and the North rates him lower. The Midwest is also more lenient on Eisenhower than is any other regional group, while the South is the most severe. Offhand, it would seem that the slavery controversy, racial matters in general, and feelings growing out of the Civil War still color historians' judgments—but we leave it to the reader to speculate more deeply on such matters. (See table 5.)

We anticipated that those historians working in the era of a particular president would tend to be more sympathetic toward him than would those specializing in another time period. This proved to be the case in almost every instance, although the results are rarely statistically significant. A few examples are striking. John Quincy Adams is rated much higher by pre-Civil War historians than by those working in the periods after 1860. The same is true for Fillmore and Zachary Taylor. Less well known presidents generally benefited most from this tendency. Hayes, William H. Taft, and McKinley, for instance, are rated much higher by post-Civil War historians than by those working in the pre-Civil War period. Only two statistically verifiable exceptions to the general rule appear: Pierce and Andrew Johnson. Andrew Johnson is rated much lower by Civil War and post-Civil War historians than by pre-Civil War historians, with Civil War historians rating him lowest of all. Pierce, in turn, is rated much higher by Civil War and post-Civil War historians than by pre-Civil War historians.¹⁷

Subject specialties played a somewhat different and, in some ways, unique role in the presidential ratings. The ratings by most specialties display no significant deviations. Whether the respondent was a political, diplomatic,

¹⁷ The ranking by historians of presidents in their time-period concentrations were subjected to an analysis of variance test and to the Duncan, Fisher, and Scheffe procedures at a significance level of .05.

economic, intellectual, or social and cultural historian seems to have made little difference in the way he judged presidential performances. But some interesting exceptions occur with certain specialties—southern historians, Afro-American historians, military historians, and those working in women's history. Here the differences will conjure up all sorts of interpretative possibilities that we will again leave to the reader.

Except for the military historians, who downgraded him severely, Carter is judged far more leniently by the latter four specialty groups than by any of the others. Southern and Afro-American historians are especially kind to Carter. Fillmore and Polk are rated far higher by southern historians than by others, but southern historians are the harshest of all the specialty groups in rating Grant and Eisenhower. Afro-American historians rate Andrew Johnson and Polk lower than do historians with other specialties. Indeed, there is a full category's difference between Andrew Johnson's rating by Afro-American historians and his rating by political historians. Interesting also is the wide divergence regarding Jefferson between Afro-American historians, who among the specialty groups give him the lowest ratings, and western and frontier historians, who give him the highest. Women's history specialists rate Washington lower by as much as two-thirds of a category than do any of the others. They treat Polk and Theodore Roosevelt much the same way. The only historians who rate the Rough Rider lower than women's history specialists are those in the legal and constitutional group. Military historians rate Eisenhower significantly higher and Madison much lower than does any other specialty group.¹⁸ (See table 6.)

In trying to determine the influence of the respondent's publication record on his rating of presidents, we were surprised to discover no significant difference in the responses among those who have published much, those who have published some, and those who have not published. Nonpublishing historians display no greater rating variations for given presidents than do historians who have published—nor do their overall rankings differ. This finding holds true even when the most prolific publishers are compared with those who have not published. The conclusion is inescapable: a survey sample selected from historians with many publications would provide only marginally different ranking results than would a random sample or a selection from those who have published nothing.¹⁹

Even more surprising was the outcome regarding the institution where the Ph.D. degree was secured. There are only marginal and insignificant variations between the ratings by those who received their doctorates from less well known institutions and the ratings by those whose degrees came from the best-

¹⁸ For each president each subject specialty was isolated, its mean rating was determined, and then the mean was compared to the mean for all the remaining specialties. A comparison-of-means test was used for the final evaluation.

¹⁹ In relation to publications, no combining of factors nor any test showed any variations among presidents at the .05 level of significance. On all regressive procedures publication factors were invariably found to be nonsignificant ($\alpha = .05$). Evaluations of the interactions of publication factors with other independent variables likewise showed little significance, as did visual inspection of scatterplots of publication factors versus standardized rankings of individual presidents.

TABLE 6
Difference from Mean Rating by Subject Specialty of Historian for Presidents
Showing Significant Variations
($\alpha = .05$)

President	Southern Historians	Afro-American Historians	Military Historians	Women's Historians	Other
Carter	.29*	.44*	-.19	.29	—
A. Johnson	.11	-.65*	-.08	-.01	—
Washington	-.14	-.06	.07	-.58*	—
Jefferson	.05	-.37*	-.06	.09	.37* ^a
Fillmore	.26*	-.16	.10	-.28	—
Eisenhower	-.28*	-.19	.24*	.27	—
Madison	.04	.10	-.23*	.30	—
Grant	-.28*	.28	-.10	.42*	—
Polk	.36*	-.55*	.09	.42*	—
T. Roosevelt	.09	-.11	.14	-.35*	-.38* ^b

* Indicates that the group's mean rating significantly deviates from the mean rating by all other historians. For instance, historians who specialize in southern history rank Jimmy Carter significantly higher than historians who do not specialize in southern history. The difference between southern historians' judgment of Carter and all other historians' judgment of Carter is 29 percent of one category.

^a western historians.

^b legal and constitutional historians.

TABLE 7
Mean Ratings by Historians with Ph.D.'s from the Big Ten and the Ivy League
for Presidents Showing Significant Variations
($\alpha = .05$)

Presidents	Big Ten Historians' Rating (N = 194)	Ivy League Historians' Rating (N = 163)	Significance Level
Arthur	4.25	4.46	.002
Eisenhower	2.84	3.07	.011
Ford	4.21	4.41	.012
Hayes	4.01	4.19	.028
Van Buren	4.05	3.86	.030

Note: The higher the score, the lower the evaluation by that group. For instance, the Big Ten evaluation of Chester A. Arthur (4.25) is a higher rating than that by the Ivy League (4.46).

known universities. The same is true for the ratings by those who secured the Ph.D. from small graduate programs and by those with Ph.D.'s from very large programs. Because the "eastern establishment" has often been charged with overrepresentation in past presidential polls, we also compared the ratings of historians having doctorates from "eastern" schools with those having doctorates from schools elsewhere and, again, found so little variation on this factor alone that no conclusion was possible. Only when the ratings of those with Ph.D.'s from the Big Ten and the ratings of those with Ph.D.'s from the Ivy League are compared do any statistically significant differences appear—and these involve only five presidents. The Ivy League rates Chester A. Arthur much lower and Martin Van Buren much higher than does the Big Ten. The Big Ten is easier on Hayes, Eisenhower, and Ford than is the Ivy League. Surprisingly, there is no real difference between the two groups on such controversial modern presidents as Lyndon Johnson, Kennedy, and Nixon. (See table 7.)

To provide one further check on the possible impact of graduate programs and the record of publications on presidential ratings, we selected from among the 846 respondents 75 whom we considered by reputation and publications to be the "top" historians in the total sample. Had we elected to conduct the present survey in the same way as the four previous polls were conducted, we would have asked these individuals to serve on our "expert" panel. As in previous polls, it turns out that this group is composed mainly of political, diplomatic, economic, and social and cultural specialists, that a disproportionate number are men, and that the vast majority are 45 years of age and older. Yet the variation between their ratings and the ratings by the remainder of the sample proved to be minor. Indeed, their top-rated eight presidents are the same as those top rated by the total sample—Lincoln, Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson, Jackson, and Truman. The only difference in order is that the experts place Washington second instead of third (conforming to the pattern of the experts in all previous polls). Similarly, the bottom six presidents are the same for the top historians as for the remainder of the sample—Andrew Johnson, Buchanan, Pierce, Grant, Nixon, and Harding. Our experts rank Andrew Johnson, Buchanan, and Grant slightly higher and Pierce and Nixon lower than does the rest of the survey sample. Only in the case of Ford does the ranking by the experts differ from the ranking by the rest of the survey sample by more than two positions. In the middle categories the names, although not the order, of the presidents are practically the same for both groups of historians. (See table 8.)

Obviously, factors other than publication record and academic reputation are far more determinant in influencing historians' ratings of presidents. Previous polls apparently could have randomly selected any 41, 55, or 75 Ph.D.-holding American historians and have secured generally similar results. On the other hand, if a preponderance of the sample had been specialists in women's history, black history, or southern history, the ratings would indeed

TABLE 8
 Presidential Ratings by "Top" Historians
 and Other Responding Historians

		"Top" Historians (N = 75)	Other Respondents (N = 771)	
Category		Mean Rating		Mean Rating
Great	Lincoln	1.16	Lincoln	1.13
	Washington	1.20	F. Roosevelt	1.21
	F. Roosevelt	1.28	Washington	1.28
	Jefferson	1.86	Jefferson	1.68
Near Great	T. Roosevelt	2.01	T. Roosevelt	1.92
	Wilson	2.09	Wilson	2.07
	Jackson	2.51	Jackson	2.30
	Truman	2.51	Truman	2.44
Above Average	L. Johnson	2.94	J. Adams	2.84
	J. Adams	2.97	L. Johnson	2.86
	Eisenhower	3.01	Eisenhower	2.99
	Kennedy	3.04	Polk	3.04
	Polk	3.31	Kennedy	3.13
	J. Q. Adams	3.40	Madison	3.29
	Monroe	3.45	Monroe	3.35
	Madison	3.45	J. Q. Adams	3.42
Average	Cleveland	3.47	Cleveland	3.43
	McKinley	3.81	McKinley	3.78
	Taft	3.95	Taft	3.86
	Van Buren	4.05	Van Buren	3.96
	Hayes	4.12	Hoover	4.00
	Hoover	4.33	Hayes	4.04
	Arthur	4.43	Arthur	4.22
	B. Harrison	4.48	Ford	4.30
Below Average	Carter	4.49	Carter	4.35
	Taylor	4.52	B. Harrison	4.39
	Ford	4.58	Taylor	4.44
	Coolidge	4.66	Tyler	4.60
	Tyler	4.68	Fillmore	4.62
Failure	Fillmore	4.81	Coolidge	4.65
	A. Johnson	5.08	Pierce	4.93
	Buchanan	5.12	A. Johnson	5.10
	Pierce	5.15	Buchanan	5.15
	Grant	5.23	Nixon	5.15
	Nixon	5.47	Grant	5.25
	Harding	5.61	Harding	5.56

have been significantly different from those generated by a random sample of the larger historian population.

Thus far the findings of the Murray-Blessing poll, in conjunction with previous ratings of presidential performance, support a number of conclusions. First, American historians are a remarkably cooperative group of professionals, intensely interested in their subject matter and willing to share their knowledge and opinions with others. If the returned surveys and accompanying comments are any indication, American historians hate technical jargon of any kind, demand that words and sentences convey precise meanings, and are extremely wary of providing a short answer without "sufficient" qualification and explanation. Further, they possess a deep suspicion of the usefulness of the computer in the area of their expertise.

Second, through the help of these historians, a trustworthy ranking of the presidents of the United States was obtained and quantitatively analyzed. Further, in evaluating the collective opinion of Ph.D.-holding historians now teaching American history at the collegiate level, the computer proved to be an indispensable aid—indeed, without it the marshaling and cross-comparison of data necessary to establish reliable rankings would have been impossible.

Third, American historians currently teaching in colleges and universities show remarkable agreement in rating presidents, particularly those presidents whom they consider to be at the top and at the bottom of the performance ladder. Even apart from the top- and bottom-rated groups, the variations and differences in the ranking of presidents by professional historians are relatively minor, occasioning no great disputes.

Fourth, a comparison of the results of all the polls indicates that usually the more contemporary a president is, the more volatile will be his ranking. A considerable period has to intervene for most presidents before their positions begin to stabilize. As a rule, contemporary presidents are judged rather harshly by historians. The shorter the interval between the president's term of office and the rating of his performance, the more severe the rating normally is. But such judgments appear to moderate rapidly as time passes. Unless a president is rated in either the top or the bottom performance categories early on, he will reach his peak ranking within twenty-five to forty years after leaving office and then gradually drop in ranking.

Fifth, although presidents tend to be most harshly judged by their contemporaries among historians, recent presidents have gained rather quick acceptance by professional historians. The Murray-Blessing poll reveals that of the nine presidents since 1929 (excluding Reagan), all except Nixon are now rated as average or above. Three are rated above average—Kennedy (thirteenth), Eisenhower (eleventh), and Lyndon Johnson (tenth); one is rated near great—Truman (eighth); and one is not only rated great, but also ranked second only to Lincoln—Franklin D. Roosevelt. No other fifty year period in American history, except for the era of the Founding Fathers and the early Republic, surpasses that performance record. In view of this finding, is it possible that, despite the low status of Nixon, the existing and oft-repeated popular belief about poor presidential leadership in the modern period may be only a myth?

Finally, of the total variation in any given president's collective rating, only a small part of it—actually, somewhat less than 15 percent—can be traced statistically to demographic and academic characteristics associated with the responding historians. Using all the data and every test available to us, we were unable to connect any overall ranking of a president primarily to any single factor or combination of factors. Demographic and academic factors, as we have shown in a number of instances, affected certain individual or group responses, but they did not materially change the total sample's collective response.²⁰ That collective response was not the result of subconscious pressures relating to sex, age, region of birth, Ph.D. granting institution, type of graduate program, or choice of time period or subject specialty but rather the product of other more significant factors that the historians consciously took into account.²¹ (See table 9.)

Future presidential surveys are not likely to change the presidential rankings much. The same presidents will probably appear at the top and at the bottom of the scale. What none of the past presidential surveys attempted to do is to ascertain why this is so. Quite properly, none of the surveys, the Murray-Blessing poll included, attempted to set arbitrary or specific criteria for the respondent to follow in judging the presidents. To have done so would have required lengthy and elaborate explanations and still would have produced arguments and misunderstandings.²²

Yet qualitative statements about presidential greatness have often been made on the basis of these polls. Schlesinger maintained that his 1948 poll showed that "great" presidents are invariably connected with some turning point in our history, are idealistic but not doctrinaire, are ahead of their times but not too far, are strong moral leaders, are expanders of executive power, are shrewd users of public opinion, and are usually opposed by the press. Commenting on the United States Historical Society poll of 1977, Henry Steele Commager claimed that American historians see "great" presidents as possessing several common denominators: they are "strong"; they are intelligent and wise; they are men of principle; they demonstrate "integrity of character"; and they are always "on the side of the people" (defined by Commager as pushing for "progress" through "reform").²³

²⁰ We cannot claim to have considered all the factors that might enter into an individual historian's response. We did not, for example, ask those surveyed to indicate political party affiliation, income level, race, or religious designation because we feared that to do so would scare off many potential respondents. Information about such matters would have afforded us additional comparisons for the rankings, but on the basis of what we now know about the effects of other factors, we do not believe that testing for these additional factors would have produced significantly different results.

²¹ Regressing the scholastic and demographic factors against presidential ratings shows the highest R^2 to be Grover Cleveland's .149, all the other presidents have R^2 values below .10, most are well below .10, as indicated in table 9. This means that less than 15 percent of Cleveland's ranking and less than 10 percent of the rankings of all other presidents can be attributed to demographic and academic variables among the responding historians.

²² It would be almost logistically impossible to conduct Bartley's forty-three tests on a mass scale involving hundreds of historians rating thirty-five to thirty-six separate presidential performances.

²³ *Life*, Nov. 1, 1948, pp. 65-66; *Parade*, May 8, 1977, pp. 16, 19.

TABLE 9
Goodness-of-Fit Measures of Demographic and Scholastic Factors in
Historians' Ratings of Different Presidents

President	Multiple R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Significance
J. Adams	.166	.027	.024	.0000
J. Q. Adams	.219	.048	.041	.0000
Arthur	.081	.006	.005	.0200
Buchanan	.239	.057	.052	.0000
Carter	.203	.041	.035	.0000
Cleveland	.386	.149	.141	.0000
Coolidge	.160	.025	.023	.0001
Eisenhower	.162	.026	.022	.0002
Fillmore	.126	.015	.013	.0032
Ford	.165	.027	.023	.0002
Grant	.132	.017	.016	.0003
B. Harrison	.119	.014	.011	.0058
Hayes	.182	.033	.027	.0001
Hoover	.129	.016	.013	.0024
Harding	.080	.006	.005	.0309
Jackson	.127	.016	.013	.0029
L. Johnson	.087	.007	.006	.0188
A. Johnson	.305	.093	.087	.0000
Jefferson	.139	.019	.016	.0009
Kennedy	.120	.014	.011	.0054
Lincoln	.128	.016	.013	.0026
McKinley	.198	.039	.035	.0000
Madison	.191	.036	.029	.0001
Monroe	.204	.041	.034	.0000
Nixon	.073	.005	.004	.0482
Pierce	.192	.037	.031	.0000
Polk	.247	.061	.054	.0000
T. Roosevelt	.108	.011	.010	.0036
F. Roosevelt	.138	.019	.017	.0002
Taft	.209	.043	.037	.0000
Truman	.239	.057	.050	.0000
Tyler	.122	.015	.012	.0043
Van Buren	.145	.021	.018	.0005
Washington	.134	.018	.016	.0003
Wilson	.200	.040	.035	.0000

Note: Independent variables relating to sex, regional characteristics, and subject specialty of historians were treated as zero-one dummy variables. Independent variables relating to age, number of publications, and area of concentration (time period) were treated as interval variables. The plot of the predicted values versus the residual values showed no clear model inadequacies for any one president, and a suppression of outliers with standardized residual values greater than 4.0 did not greatly improve a model's fit for any one president.

The conclusions of Schlesinger and Commager may well be true, but only one study so far has really attempted to address in any analytical way the problem of criteria for judging presidents. In 1970, using the Schlesinger polls of 1948 and 1962 as a touchstone and employing social-psychological scaling methods, Gary Maranell asked several hundred members of the Organization of American Historians to rate each president according to seven dimensions: (1) his general prestige; (2) his "strength . . . in shaping the events of his day"; (3) whether he was "passive" or "active"; (4) whether he was "idealistic" or "practical"; (5) his "flexibility" or "inflexibility"; (6) his accomplishments; and (7) the amount of information the respondent possessed about him. Maranell concluded that the general prestige of a president does not rest on any judgment concerning his relative idealism, flexibility, practicality, or obduracy, nor does it depend primarily on the degree to which he controlled events. Rather, a president's prestige has its closest correlation with the accomplishments of his administration. The latter, in turn, are broadly related to the "strength" and "activeness" shown by the president.²⁴ The Maranell study suggests rather strongly, therefore, that general personality traits such as flexibility, inflexibility, practicality, and idealism are relatively useless in defining presidential greatness, since these can be seen as either assets or liabilities depending on the president and the given circumstance. The study further suggests that, at least among the dimensions tested, historians rate presidents mainly on the basis of actual presidential accomplishments.

Aside from having ranked the presidents anew, the present study continues the task of systematically uncovering historians' unspoken criteria for judging presidents. From the cross-comparisons of demographic and personal data made possible by the Murray-Blessing poll, we now know which factors *do not* primarily determine historians' ratings of presidents. An analysis of the remaining sections of the survey will, we hope, shed further light on what *does* primarily affect presidential ratings. For example, other presidential personality characteristics such as honesty, charisma, frankness, and humaneness remain to be tested statistically to determine if they are crucial to the judgments of historians, and, finally, the notion of presidential accomplishment must be defined much more sharply.

In any case, by the agreement with which they have rated presidents since the first Schlesinger poll in 1948, professional historians have demonstrated that they do have in mind more than vague and uncritical generalities when they evaluate presidential performances. If these criteria can now be drawn from the collective opinion reflected in the Murray-Blessing ratings, then the exercise of ranking presidents will acquire a more significant meaning.

²⁴ Gary M. Maranell, "The Evaluation of Presidents. An Extension of the Schlesinger Polls," *Journal of American History*, 57 (June 1970), 104-13.

Historians Name Lincoln Best U.S. President

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa., Dec. 23 (UPI)—Abraham Lincoln is the best president the United States ever had and Warren Harding the worst, according to a survey of the nation's historians.

Pennsylvania State University professor Robert Murray sent a 19-page questionnaire to almost 2,000 historians asking them to rate the nation's presidents and about 970 historians responded, Murray said today.

Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were rated as "great" presidents, Murray said.

At the bottom of the scale, the following presidents were rated as failures: Andrew Johnson, James Buchanan, Richard Nixon, Ulysses Grant and Harding.

Of recent presidents, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson were rated above average while Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter were rated average.

The survey also found two important keys to becoming a top-rated president. They are: paying great attention to foreign policy and handling it in a direct manner; and successfully protecting national security interests.

"If presidents do all these things, they will have a leg up on being ranked good presidents," Murray said.

The survey found the historians agree that a president's power must be absolute concerning national security.

"They [historians] will even allow a president to ride roughshod over Congress if the president feels it is in the national interest to do so," Murray said.

In what Murray called a "surprising finding," one in five historians said they would allow the president to order the assassination of archenemies of the nation or perpetrators of mass genocide in peacetime.

"This 20 percent figure is higher than the percentage of historians who would allow the president to lie to the American public," Murray said.

The historians rated the presidents as follows:

Great: Abraham Lincoln; Franklin D. Roosevelt; George Washington; Thomas Jefferson.

Near Great: Theodore Roosevelt; Woodrow Wilson; Andrew Jackson; Harry S. Truman.

Above Average: John Adams; Lyndon B. Johnson; Dwight D. Eisenhower; James K. Polk; John F. Kennedy; James Madison; James Monroe; John Quincy Adams; Grover Cleveland.

Average: William McKinley; William Howard Taft; Martin Van Buren; Herbert Hoover; Rutherford B. Hayes; Chester A. Arthur; Gerald Ford; Jimmy Carter; Benjamin Harrison.

Below Average: Zachary Taylor; John Tyler; Millard Fillmore; Calvin Coolidge; Franklin Pierce.

Failures: Andrew Johnson; James Buchanan; Richard Nixon; Ulysses S. Grant; Warren G. Harding.

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NY Times
3/8/84

WASHINGTON TALK

Briefing

Presidential Roots

Steeped as we are in the quadrennial foray over who will reside in the White House, the Smithsonian Institution Press has published a book in which historians take a look at former Presidents and their roots. Most occupants of the Oval Office, concludes the book, "Every Four Years," "arrived there through a combination of circumstance and happenstance, often with little preparation for the job."

✓ Abraham Lincoln, according to one historian, Mark E. Neely, "had absolutely no executive or administrative experience." Harry S. Truman was a haberdasher whose business failed as he neared 40. Woodrow Wilson at 54 withdrew from the cloistered groves of academe to enter the political arena. The early Presidents — Washington, John Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and John Quincy Adams — had patrician backgrounds. Andrew Jackson speculated in land and tolerated somewhat rowdy fetes at the White House while Ulysses S. Grant is described by another historian, Michael Lawson, as showing "absolutely no distinction as a youth."

The bottom line, espoused by the book's editor, Robert Post, is, "Who knows what it takes to be qualified?" Left unresolved was whether a man as homely as Lincoln or a man with wooden teeth, George Washington, would be eliminated early in the modern race for the Presidency because of the fierce eye of the television camera.

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Little essays, by the number

Three years ago, Harper's magazine began to publish a page of numbers that say a lot, a little or nothing much at all about the state of the world:

"The number of people in Florida on the waiting list to see an execution (125); rank of national and local Miss America pageants among all sources of college scholarship money for women (1); average number of jokes in a 40-minute Henny Youngman monologue: (245)."

Now, by grouping the monthly Harper's Index, numbers ordinarily thought to be unrelated, and by adding notes on sources, the editors have enhanced their own creation. The result, titled "The Harper's Index Book," (Holt paperback, \$6.95), is a collection of brief, provocative commentaries:

Budget per episode of "Miami Vice": \$1.5 million. Annual budget of the Miami vice squad: \$1,161,741.

Percentage of Americans in 1985 who didn't recognize Mr. Clean: 7. Percentage who didn't recognize George Bush: 44.

Percentage of Japanese with IQs above 130: 10.

Percentage of Americans: 2.

Members of the Abraham Lincoln Association: 425. Members of the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation: 650. X

Copies of Penthouse and Playboy sold per 1,000 residents in Des Moines: 160. Per 1,000 residents in New York City: 42.

Reported cases of people bitten by rats in New York in 1985: 311. Of people bitten by other people: 1,519.

Percentage of American high school students who identify Israel as an Arab nation: 40.

Percentage of Americans who know which side the United States supports in Nicaragua: 50.

U.S. military ground personnel in Central America: 11,800. Cuban military ground personnel in Central America: 3,000.

The amount the Reagan administration budgeted for military bands in 1987: \$154.2 million. For the National Endowment of the Arts: \$144.9 million.

More numbers Tuesday.

Clarence Petersen

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America's greatest presidents

The public's view

Ratings last month in a survey that asked: Whom do you regard as the greatest U.S. president?

Abraham Lincoln	15%
John F. Kennedy	13%
Bill Clinton	11%
George W. Bush	11%
Ronald Reagan	10%

Historians' view

Ratings of presidential leadership by 58 historians in 2000:

1. Abraham Lincoln
2. Franklin Roosevelt
3. George Washington
4. Theodore Roosevelt
5. Harry Truman

Sources: USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll of 1,009 adults conducted April 5-6; margin of error ± 3 percentage points. C-SPAN survey of 58 historians released in February 2000.

By Adrienne Lewis, USA TODAY

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Happy Birthday, Abe: Gallup Finds Lincoln Now Tops Reagan as All-Time Best Prez

By E&P Staff

Published: February 19, 2007 10:15 PM ET

NEW YORK Just in time for President's Day, a new Gallup poll finds Abraham Lincoln now topping Ronald Reagan as the public's idea of the greatest U.S. president ever.

John F. Kennedy edges Bill Clinton for the #3 spot, with Franklin D. Roosevelt coming in at number five. George Washington can do no better than sixth.

Gallup notes that respondents tend to favor presidents of later vintage.

Reagan had bested traditional leader Lincoln in the previous poll, in 2005, in the aftermath of the former's death.

Eighteen percent of Americans today name Lincoln as the greatest U.S. president. He is closely followed by Reagan, with 16%, and John F. Kennedy, with 14%. Bill Clinton (13%) and Franklin D. Roosevelt (9%) round out the top five.

After Washington at #6 comes Truman at #7 and then a tie for #8 with Teddy Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Jefferson, Carter -- and George W. Bush, all at 2%. Bush had stood at 5% two years ago.

The poll was taken February 9-11.

More from Gallup: Run, Al, Run? Support seems "lukewarm" for Gore anyway.

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E&P Staff

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Lincoln ranked best president by historians

By NATASHA T. METZLER — 1 day ago

WASHINGTON (AP) — Just days after the nation honored the 200th anniversary of his birth, 65 historians ranked Abraham Lincoln as the nation's best president.

Former President George W. Bush, who left office last month, was ranked 36th out of the 42 men who had been chief executive by the end of 2008, according to a survey conducted by the cable channel C-SPAN.

Bush scored lowest in international relations, where he was ranked 41st, and in economic management, where he was ranked 40th. His highest ranking, 24th, was in the category of pursuing equal justice for all. He was ranked 25th in crisis leadership and vision and agenda setting.

In contrast, Lincoln was ranked in the top three in each of the 10 categories evaluated by participants.

In C-SPAN's only other ranking of presidents, in 2000, former President Bill Clinton jumped six spots from No. 21 to 15. Other recent presidents moved positions as well: Ronald Reagan advanced from No. 11 to 10, George H.W. Bush rose from No. 20 to 18 and Jimmy Carter fell from No. 22 to 25.

This movement illustrates that presidential reputations are influenced by present-day concerns, said survey adviser and participant Edna Medford.

"Today's concerns shape our views of the past, be it in the area of foreign policy, managing the economy or human rights," Medford said in a statement.

After Lincoln, the academics rated George Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt and Harry Truman as the best leaders overall. The same five received top spots in the 2000 survey, although Washington and Franklin D. Roosevelt swapped spots this year.

Rated worst overall were James Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, Franklin Pierce, William Henry Harrison and Warren G. Harding.

The survey was conducted in December and January. Participants ranked each president on a scale of one, "not effective" to 10, "very effective," on a list of 10 leadership qualities including relations with Congress, public persuasion and moral authority.

The Oval: Tracking the Obama presidency

[Obama's day: A quiet Presidents Day](#)

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Feb 21, 2011

Reagan tops Gallup's 'greatest president' poll; Clinton is third

07:28 AM



By [David Jackson](#), USA TODAY

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Respondents in a [new Gallup Poll](#) this Presidents Day have tapped Ronald Reagan as the nation's greatest chief executive, ahead of Abraham Lincoln.

Bill Clinton finished third and John Kennedy fourth, just ahead of George Washington and Franklin Roosevelt.

Nothing against Reagan, Clinton or JFK, but we suspect "the recency effect" is at play here.

"Americans as a group have a propensity to mention recent presidents, not surprising given that the average American constantly hears about and from presidents in office during their lifetime, and comparatively little about historical presidents long dead," Gallup reports.

It adds: "Four of the five most recent presidents are in the top 10 greatest presidents list this year -- Obama, George W. Bush, Clinton, and Reagan."

Barack Obama finished sixth in the poll, just ahead of Theodore Roosevelt and Harry Truman.

The recent publicity about the centennial of Reagan's birth also raised the Gipper's public profile.

Partisanship is also at play in this poll, reports Gallup:

Americans clearly evaluate presidents through partisan lenses -- with Democrats and Republicans each most likely to choose a greatest president within their own party. Republicans name Reagan substantially more than anyone else, followed by Washington, Lincoln, Kennedy, and then George W. Bush.

Democrats are most likely to say that Clinton was the greatest U.S. president, followed by Kennedy, Obama, Franklin Roosevelt, and Lincoln.

Independents name Lincoln and then Reagan as top choices.

Here are the top 10 in the poll, which simply asked respondents: "Who do you regard as as the greatest United States president?" (There is an interesting tie for 10th place.)

Ronald Reagan -- 19%

Abraham Lincoln -- 14%



■ CAPTION
By Mike Sargent, AFP/Getty Images



■ CAPTION
By Michael Loccisano, Getty Images

Bill Clinton -- 13%

John F. Kennedy -- 11%

George Washington -- 10%

Franklin Roosevelt -- 8%

Barack Obama -- 5%

Theodore Roosevelt -- 3%

Harry Truman -- 3%

George W. Bush -- 2%

Thomas Jefferson -- 2%

See photos of: [George W. Bush](#), [Barack Obama](#), [Bill Clinton](#), [Ronald Reagan](#), [George Washington](#), [Abraham Lincoln](#), [Thomas Jefferson](#), [Theodore Roosevelt](#)

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outback (106 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: <1m ago

ClanMackinnon - agreed. Washington should be #1. He set the standard for those who followed him. Jefferson deserves better that to be tied with Bush Jr. Hell...Garfield even deserves better that that.

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COMPARISON

